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by
Salaahuddeen 'Alee 'Abdul-Mawjood

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PREFACE

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious,
the Most Merciful*

All praise is for Allah. We praise Him, seek His help and seek His forgiveness. And we seek refuge with Allah from the wickedness of our souls and the evil of our deeds. Whoever Allah guides, none can mislead him; and whoever He misleads, none can guide him. And I bear witness that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah alone, without partners, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

"O you who believe, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]." [1]

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever an Observer over you." [2]

[1] Soorah Aal 'Imraan: 102.

[2] Soorah an-Nisaa: 1.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ۖ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا﴾

"O you who believe, fear Allah and speak words straight to the point. He will [then] amend for you your deeds and forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly attained a great attainment."^[1]

To proceed:

The truest speech is the Book of Allah and the best guidance is the guidance brought by Muhammad (ﷺ). And worst matters are newly invented matters [in the religion of Islam]. Every newly invented matter is an innovation, and every innovation is deviance.

This book is part of a series of biographies of major scholars of *fiqh* and *hadeeth* from amongst the Muslim *Ummah*, which Allah has granted glory and an exalted status until the Day of Judgement. We will focus on both general and particular aspects of these scholars' lives, including their qualities, character, etiquette, their practice of their religion and their worship of Allah. What a need we have, particularly in this age, of such examples, for this *Ummah* will not have its dignity and glory restored to it until it returns to the qualities possessed by its early members and revives those traits of theirs which have passed into oblivion.

Many Muslims are completely unaware of the lives of these scholars, so it's no surprise that non-Muslims would also be ignorant of them. As a result, the torch

^[1] Soorah al-Ahzaab: 70-71.

that might light the way forward for the bewildered and confused has gone out, leaving them waiting for someone to relight it to illuminate the path. People have grown tired of hearing about lovely ideals. They want to see concrete examples of Islam in practice as it was manifested in the lives of those great scholars and the Muslims who followed them. For them it was a reality which penetrated their hearts and minds and became part of their flesh and sinews. Their every breath, movement and moment of stillness was for Allah. If they spoke, their speech was for Allah, and if they kept silent, their silence was for Allah.

They illuminated the world with their practice of *deen*, their knowledge, their worship and their deeds in general. If you had looked at their conduct and character you would have seen the etiquette and character of the prophets. If you had looked at their buying, their selling and their transactions with people, you would have seen the practical embodiment of the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Remembrance of such people softens the hearts. That, in turn, revitalizes limbs which had fallen into disuse to start moving again to draw closer to Allah. They become inspired to catch up again with the caravan from which they had fallen behind. Look and consider, that you might benefit from the words of Mukhallad ibn Husayn.^[1] When he thought about the qualities of the pious he would say: "Don't mention us in the same breath with them. An able-bodied person doesn't walk like a cripple."^[2]

^[1] See *Taqreeb at-Tahdheeb*, no. 6530.

^[2] Aboo Nu'aym, *Hilyah al-Awliyaa*, 8:266.

However much is written or spoken about them is not enough to adequately describe them, and one never grows tired of hearing about them.

It is a blessing of Allah that Maktaba Dar-us-Salam in Riyadh has decided to make the biographies of the great scholars available to the Muslims throughout the world, to make them aware of their virtues, provide Muslim youth with examples for emulation, and bind the contemporary *Ummah* with its past.

Our respected brethren, the administrators of Maktaba Dar-us-Salam, have requested me to write some essays to acquaint the Muslims with their scholars. I consulted Allah [by praying *Salaah al-Istikhaarah*] and decided to go ahead with the project. And it is Allah Whose help is sought [to achieve all goals]. I have attempted to gather the scattered information about their lives and bring to light little-known matters about them, that their lives may become lamps of guidance for this *Ummah* and especially for its youth, that they might emulate them and adhere to the methodology they adhered to.

This book is the biography of Imam Aboo Dawood Sijistani, the compiler of *Sunan Aboo Dawood*, one of the six major books of *hadeeth* that are a primary source of knowledge about Islam. In compiling his biography I tried to keep it from being so long as to be boring but not so short as to be uninformative. I mentioned the reports with their sources, but I tried to avoid referencing every report in order to avoid burdening the reader with lengthy footnotes. I did not attempt to examine the chains of transmission for

these reports, for I relied upon the judgement of the major *hadeeth* scholars, such as Dhahabee, who saw the reports fit enough to mention in their works. I avoided reports that major critically-minded scholars criticized or declared unreliable. And it is Allah Whose help is sought.

I ask Allah to make it beneficial and to give young Muslims the vision to perceive every good and success [in their true light].

Salaahuddeen 'Alee 'Abdul-Mawjood

2. Another example of this is the Prophet's ﷺ prohibition of eating [the flesh of] every predator with fangs and eating [the flesh of] every bird with talons.^[1]

The Sahaabah and the Sunnah

The first people to come in contact with the *Sunnah* were the honoured Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ). They memorized it, understood it, knew about it in general and in detail, and they conveyed it—as they had been ordered—to those who came after them.

Those who received it next were the *Taabi'een*, and they conveyed it to those who came after them, and so on. A Companion would say, "I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying such-and-such." The *Taabi'ee* would say, "I heard so-and-so, the Companion, saying, 'I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying such-and-such.'" The one who came after the *Taabi'ee* would say, "I heard so-and-so say that he heard so-and-so, the Companion, saying, 'I heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying such-and-such.'"

The Need for Preserving the Sunnah

Everyone who knows that Muhammad (ﷺ) was the seal of the prophets knows that his *Sharee'ah* is the seal of divinely revealed legal systems, and eternal life depends upon following it, thus he knows that people's need for preserving the *Sunnah* is more pressing than their need for food and drink.

^[1] *Saheeh Muslim*, the Book of Hunting and Slaughtering Animals, Chapter: the Prohibition of Every Predator with Fangs

Imâm Aboo Dawood Sijistani

One of the blessings of Allah upon this *Ummah* is that He appointed for it people who would undertake to preserve the *Sunnah* of their Prophet (ﷺ). They were the scholars who devoted their entire lives to this monumental task, foregoing physical pleasures and taking delight, instead, in spending the nights recording *hadeeths* and in undergoing hardships in order to convey even one *hadeeth* from the Prophet (ﷺ). One of those eminent scholars is the subject of this biography: Aboo Dawood Sijistaanee.

His Name and Lineage

He is the imam, the *shaykh* of the *Sunnah*, the leading memorizer of *hadeeth*, Aboo Dawood Azdee Sijistani, the foremost *hadeeth* scholar of Basrah. His name was Sulaymaan ibn Ash'ath ibn Shaddaad ibn 'Amr ibn 'Aamir.^[1] Aboo Dawood was a pure Arab from the tribe of 'Azd, a well-known Yemeni tribe.

The last part of his name is an attribution to Sijistan, a vast province in what is now southern Afghanistan, about a ten-day journey south of Herat. Its main city at that time was Zaranj. Its land is almost entirely sand and salty hardpan. The wind never stops blowing there. Its unrelenting intensity makes it like a giant grindstone wearing away everything it touches.^[2]

His Birth and Upbringing

Aboo Dawood was born in 202 AH.

^[1] Dhahabee, *Siyar al-A'laam an-Nubalaa*, 13:203.

^[2] *Mu'jam al-Buldaan*, 3:190.

Dhahabee said:

He was born in the year 202. He traveled [extensively], compiled, composed and achieved mastery of this discipline [of *hadeeth* science]. Aboo 'Ubayd 'Aajuree said he heard [Aboo Dawood] saying, "I was born in Year Two [of the century], and I prayed the funeral prayer over 'Affaan [i.e. 'Affaan ibn Muslim ibn 'Abdullaah, the freed slave of 'Azrah ibn Thaabit Ansaaree, a leading *hadeeth* scholar of Iraq] in the year 220. When I entered Basrah they were saying that 'Uthmaan ibn Haytham, the Mu'addhin, had died the previous day, and I attended one lesson of Aboo 'Umar, the Blind."^[1]

Haakim said, "Sulaymaan ibn Ash'ath Sijistaanee was born in Sijistaan, and he and his forebears to this day have business dealings, properties and charitable endowments there. He left it to pursue knowledge and settled in Basrah."^[2]

"As for Sijistaan, it is a small region bordering the land of Sind. Herat lies to the west. To the south is a desert that lies between it and the provinces of Fars and Kirmaan. To the east is another desert and steppe which separate it from Makraan, the capital of Sind. The furthest extent of this eastern border is Multan, to the north of which is the beginning of India. Sijistaan is a land with plenty of date-palm trees and sand. It is the third of the seven provinces. The capital of Sijistaan is Zaranj. It is thirty-two degrees wide. The name Zaranj is sometimes used to refer to all of

^[1] Dhahabee, *Siyar al-A'laam an-Nubalaa*, 13:204.

^[2] Ibid. 13:217.

Sijistan. It has a wall and a great *masjid*. It is on the banks of a large river. Its length starting from the isles of Khaalidaat is 89 degrees. A person from Sijistaan is also sometimes called a Sijzee."^[1]

Subkee said, "Aboo Dawood was from Sijistaan, the well-known province bordering the lands of India. Ibn Khalkaan was mistaken when he said that Sijistaan is a village in the vicinity of Basrah."^[2]

Aboo Dawood settled in Basrah after the defeat of the tyrannical leader of the Zanj Rebellion. He spread knowledge there, but he would travel frequently to Baghdad during his stay there.

Khateeb [Baghdadi] wrote, "It is said that he compiled the *Sunan* early [in his career]. He showed it to Ahmad ibn Hanbal, who was favourably impressed by it and praised it."^[3]

His Brother (May Allah Have Mercy upon Him):

His brother Muhammad ibn Ash'ath was slightly older than him and accompanied him in his travels. He narrated *hadeeths* from Shu'bah's students, and his nephew, Aboo Bakr ibn Aboo Dawood narrated from him. He died in middle age some time before his brother.^[4]

His Sons

Aboo Dawood's son Aboo Bakr Muhammad ibn Aboo

^[1] Ibid. 13:220.

^[2] Ibn Subkee, *Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi'iyyah al-Kubraa*, 5:293.

^[3] Dhahabee, *Siyar al-A'laam an-Nubalaa*, 13:209.

^[4] Ibid. 13:221.